

Advocates suggest day center for homeless

By David Nivens

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HIGH POINT - Agencies and churches serving the homeless should work to open a day center in High Point, several advocates for the homeless agreed Monday during a panel discussion at Open Door Ministries.

Although several agencies offer homeless people a place to sleep and to get a meal, there is no place for them to wash their clothes or to use a telephone to reach job connections.

High Point City Councilwoman Bernita Sims brought the idea to the fifth annual Homelessness in High Point program. "The homeless need a place for these basic services," Sims said. "We need to do something to get people exposed to opportunities."

The agencies and churches are focusing on the 10-year plan to end chronic homelessness in Guilford County by 2016. Communities with a homelessness relief plan qualify for federal housing grants. The county also received a \$50,000 grant from the Community Foundation of Greater Greensboro and a \$644,000 grant from the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services for a housing support project. "If we had a day center, people would have a hub to go to during the day," said Sarah Holland, director of Leslie's House, a shelter for homeless, single women.

On any given day, more than 1,200 homeless people go through shelters in the county, but there are others who live in "camps" that the shelters may or may not see. They would need transportation to a day center.

Volunteers at Hope Outreach Center on Westchester Drive take meals to the homeless in the camps and others who live on the streets, said Dan Hodgson, outreach pastor. "There are homeless people out there who can not come here to eat," Hodgson said, "and we feed their souls, too."

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